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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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PRESS BRIEFING BY
ADMINISTRATOR OF NASA, DR. JAMES FLETCHER,
COMMERCE SECRETARY, C. WILLIAM VERITY, AND
TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY JAMES BURNLEY
ON SPACE POLICY

3:00 P.M. EST

MR. FITZWATER: Today's briefing is on the President's new space policy. We have with us today James Fletcher, Administrator of NASA and Commerce Secretary C. William Verity, and Transportation Secretary James Burnley. All three will have brief statements and then take your questions, and we have plenty of time this afternoon. If you'll just hold up your hands they'll recognize you and all three will be here to take your questions. We'll start with Dr. Fletcher.

DR. FLETCHER: Thank you, Marlin. Ladies and gentlemen, today, as you know, President Reagan issued a new national space policy designed to guide the United States' activities in space well into the future. This policy confirms the basic goal of the United States' leadership in space and the President's strong commitment to the space station as the key to such leadership.

The policy reaffirms that space activities seek a variety of national goals and objectives. Among them are the strengthening of the United States' scientific, technological, political, economic, and international leadership. In fact, the new policy stresses that civil space activity contributes significantly to enhancing America's world leadership.

The President's new space policy is a comprehensive statement. It was derived from a long and thorough review of previous presidential directives and of assessments of current and future opportunities. As mentioned, Secretaries Verity, Burnley, and many others in the administration were involved in this process, as were we at NASA.

With the new policy, President Reagan has added a major new thrust to the objectives and directions that have guided the civil space program for the past three decades. The policy clearly establishes that for the first time the United States has a long range goal of expanding human presence and activity beyond earth orbit into the solar system. This is a goal of enormous significance with potentially historic future implications. This is a policy of investment for the future, it lays the necessary groundwork now for the decisions for the next century, it puts a challenge squarely on NASA, and it is a challenge that we accept.

The new policy reaffirms the President's strong support for the space shuttle and for the permanently manned space station of the United States, which is developing with the expected participation of its allies. The President's policy stresses the unique and vital role of the space shuttle in the nation's space transportation system. It calls for further enhancement of this system's capabilities as new requirements emerge, and for NASA and the Department of Defense to work together to develop new, cost-effective launch systems, one of which, as you probably know, is the Advanced Launch System, to enhance national capabilities for transportation to, from, and within space. The policy also states that the national security sector will continue to use the STS, the Space Transportation System, in response to that sector's specific mission requirements.

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With regard to the space station, the policy states that the station is to contribute directly to the preservation of United States preeminence in manned space flight and to the goal of expansion of human presence and activity into the solar system. And to prepare for that development, the policy focuses appropriately on the near-term, on the development and testing of the emerging, innovative -- we call it "pathfinder" technologies that will make future decisions possible. The "pathfinder" program will permit a future administration to act with competence in deciding on specific manned exploration goals and timetables to meet them.

In this area, as in several other areas, the policy recognizes the critical role that technology advances have played and will continue to play in preserving this nation's leadership in vital areas of space activity and on Earth, as well.

The policy recognizes the existence of a separate commercial sector, as well, and reaffirms the President's strong commitment to encouraging a healthy and expansive commercial space industry. I stress that last point because, although I've been addressing primarily the civil sector portions of the national space policy, the policy also says a great deal about commercial space. And in that regard, there's been a related effort underway to develop special initiatives in support of the President's thrust to develop the commercial use of space.

NASA has long been in the forefront of this effort and supports the goals of those initiatives wholeheartedly. In this regard, NASA will take the lead in implementing many of these initiatives, including government actions to lease space on a new commercially financed and developed and managed on-orbit space facility.

I believe that Secretaries Verity and Burnley will also want to speak about those important new initiatives in just a moment. But let me sum up things by saying that the President's new national space policy has recharged the nation's space program by giving it new momentum and the prospects of new challenges and new opportunities. Time and again, Americans have demonstrated that we can lead in exploring new frontiers and in developing their potential for the benefit of humankind. This new policy charts a clear course on the greatest frontier of them all, space.

Thank you very much. And now. Secretary Verity.

SECRETARY VERITY: Thank you very much, Jim, and ladies and gentlemen. The President's goal was to develop a policy that we use the country's resources for space exploration and develop it more efficiently. It shifts major responsibilities for the space development from the public to the private sector. But it is not a policy that takes from one sector and gives to another. It is a policy that takes advantage of the strength of both sectors.

The private sector, which makes investments at the risk of failure, is innovative and dynamic. This policy taps that creativity and, furthermore, the private sector handles routine operations more efficiently.

The government is strong on research. Federal laboratories have often been on the cutting edge of research. This policy frees government scientists and researchers to let their imaginations run free and develop new concepts and processes. Think of this policy as one that will restore America's leadership in space and create new industries and jobs. That is the proper way to view it.

It's a policy that not only will improve the depth of our capabilities, but strengthen national security by making us more competitive at home and abroad. The President's national space

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policy officially recognizes for the first time that there is a commercial space industry. Space is no longer the province of just the government. This policy ensures that no government agency will erect roadblocks that will hamper the activities of the private space industry. In fact, it specifically forbids such action. It ensures that government agencies will take full advantage of the private sector's expertise. The President's policy requires that they buy commercially available space, goods and services to the fullest extent feasible. By buying services, the government now will make the private sector responsible for design, financing and development and operation. This reform will save the government money, reduce the amount of funding it must supply up front, and shift the risk of cost overruns to the private sector. Space technology will build new industries and jobs and assure a competitive economy into the next century. The President's new space policy will unleash America's entrepreneurial spirit into space -- the next business sector.

And now we'll hear from Jim Burnley, Secretary of Transportation.

SECRETARY BURNLEY: I want to call your attention to the portion of the presidential directive in which the policy is set out today that asserts that U.S. space transportation systems must provide a balanced, robust and flexible capability with sufficient resiliency to allow continued operations despite failures of any single system. And to achieve this goal, federal agencies are to encourage the development and use of United States' private sector space transportation capabilities without direct federal subsidy. NASA and other agencies are to contract from unmanned launch services directly with the private sector.

Furthermore, the U.S. government is to encourage the use of its launch facilities by U.S. companies, as well as facilitate the establishment of private launch sites.

The Department of Transportation has had primary responsibility since 1984 for developing and carrying out federal policies pertaining to commercial launch activities. Through our Office of Commercial Space Transportation, we issue licenses to launch companies after reviewing their launch plans, with particular emphasis on safety and national security issues. In fact, today we are announcing our approval of a license request submitted by CONATEC, Inc. CONATEC will conduct two sub-orbital sounding rocket launches from the Army's White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico in October of this year, making them also the first commercial launches to be conducted by a private U.S. firm.

As Bill said a moment ago, the ability of U.S. firms to compete has substantial international trade implications. The French-led Ariane consortium, the Chinese and the Soviets are all seeking to sell launch services to satellite owners all over the world. U.S. firms expect to compete for contracts to launch 15-20 satellites per year for the foreseeable future, and they're off to a good start having signed contracts to launch 13 satellites through 1991. Another 15 to 20 reservations have been made by payload owners with U.S. launch firms, meaning that serious contract negotiations are in progress in those instances. And I believe the prospects of this industry, given its 96 percent success rate for our established rockets, the Titan, Atlas Centaur and Delta, that the prospects are very good. And our job at DOT is to make sure safety, foreign policy and national security concerns are addressed, and then to get the government out of the way so our private sector can effectively compete for both domestic and foreign business.

The President's policies being announced today reaffirm and strengthen the role of the private sector in assuring the United States can rely on a variety of launch systems and the major share of the international trade and launch services comes to U.S. companies. Now, I'll be happy to take your questions, and I'll ask Bill and Jim to join me for that.

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Q Will CONATAC be building its own rockets, or using rockets provided by the United States government?

SECRETARY BURNLEY: They have a two-stage rocket that they are buying from other private companies, so this particular set of launches is totally in the private sector.

Q I'd like to ask Dr. Fletcher -- to what extent does this set out a commitment to the industrial space facility, and to what extent does that water down the scope of the space station?

DR. FLETCHER: Well, it does not water down the scope of the space station in any way. We're talking about in 1993 or before. And the space station comes later than that. So, in no way does it water down that. In terms of this industrial space facility, so-called, that's a trade name. I think it's clear that the President intends us to go ahead with that, and we're on that track.

Q Dr. Fletcher, who -- where is the funding for the leasing on the industrial space facility coming from? Is that out of your budget? And if so, how much is it?

DR. FLETCHER: Well, the amount is not defined, but the corporation that has been pushing for this -- they call it the space industry's partnership -- has indicated they only want a commitment by the federal government to lease a portion of their activity and, of course, of their facility if you like. And the portion that we will lease will be in the neighborhood of what they're suggesting. It will be in the neighborhood of $140 million a year over a five-year period. And that will come out of NASA's budget, but as an add-on to NASA's budget. At least that's the intention at the present time.

Q Dr. Fletcher, you've said that NASA has absolutely no use identified for the industrial space facility and now you're suggesting that we're going to spend $700 million?

DR. FLETCHER: NASA has always supported the idea of an industrial space facility. At one time, we had intended to use that entirely as a private venture and we had agreed to launch the facility with the space shuttle -- this is before the accident -- I think it was 1991. That use changed and basically -- in those days it was planned to be a purely commercially leased facility. We had to reorient our thinking and also reorient the use of the space station so that we, the government, could actually lease probably something like 70 percent of it. And in that mode, we think we can make very good use of that industrial space facility, as it's called.

Q If I could follow that up, what will be the use now under the revised --

DR. FLETCHER: Well, the approximate use -- and Bill Verity can back me up on this, will be something like the following. It will -- it may very well be a competitive procurement, so the exact numbers, of course, will depend on what people propose if it goes that way. And it will go something like 70 percent of it will be used by the government. This includes the Department of Energy, it includes NASA, the National Bureau of Standards, National Science Foundation, and the Defense Department. The other 30 percent of its use will probably be purely commercial, and that will be up to the commercial endeavor to decide who the customers and so forth will be.

Q Dr. Fletcher, what does the new policy on manned exploration of the solar system give you that you didn't have before the policy with regard to planning advanced manned missions back to the moon, and eventually to Mars?

DR. FLETCHER: It does two things, especially along with the budget that will be forthcoming next week. But at least the

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Declassified and Approved For Release 2012/07/17 : CIA-RDP92B00181R001801700012-1

space station part of it has already been announced. It sets a strong support for the space station over a three year period, something like $6.1 billion assigned for that. And then it sets the follow-on and the uses of the space station and the technology in the so-called "pathfinder" problem. The "pathfinder" consists of a large number of technologies having to do, to some extent with operations in space, to some extent with exploration, and so on -- the things that are necessary to go on out into the solar system. And also it sets a goal -- maybe that's the most important thing at all -- it sets a long-term goal, probably some time in the next century to go back to the moon to establish a base there or to go on to Mars or to do one in sequence towards the other. So it establishes a goal and it establishes a technology over the next several years to arrive at that goal along with the space station.

Q Dr. Fletcher, is this --

Q You mentioned that it might be a repetitive process of seeking proposals for a private space facility. Is there anyone else on the horizon right now other than space industries and their group that might provide that?

DR. FLETCHER: We have no knowledge of that. The typical way we proceed on something like that at NASA is to make an announcement in Commerce Business Daily and then see who responds, and that hasn't taken place yet.

Q How long a process do you think before you -- an agreement is signed with somebody?

DR. FLETCHER: From today, we at NASA have signed up to a 150-day procurement policy which is a little faster than we do most procurements, but that's what we think we can do and we think we can make it.

Q Dr. Fletcher, what about the Soviet connection? Is there any possibility of a joint mission to Mars with the Soviets, as there was some talk around summit time about that?

DR. FLETCHER: Of course there is always the possibility of a joint mission to Mars with the Soviets, but that's downstream a ways. There is no way we can sign up to a commitment over that long a period of time. We're talking 20 years as a minimum -- a program with the Soviet Union. I think, however, it is quite proper to talk about the possibility of such a venture. But the main thing we are doing is setting out the technology to achieve that, and also we're making mission studies the best way to achieve that mission -- these will be interwoven, if you like, with the pathfinder technology, so that one reinforces the other.

Q Well, what stands in the way of that Soviet mission? Is it technology transfer? What is it?

DR. FLETCHER: There's nothing standing in the way. This is a presidential decision, and I think it's premature to make a decision that -- of that scope.

Q Can you set a target date?

Q Dr. Fletcher, NASA has been having a touch time getting satellites up in the sky, except for your recent success. Is the new policy to allow private firms to do that a concession that NASA believes other firms could do it better?

DR. FLETCHER: Oh, I think that decision was made almost two years ago, when we decided to go ahead with the commerical ELV industry -- Jim Burnley can speak better to that. But that's a thriving business right now, and he announced a new one today, but I'll bet you next week there will be another one and so on. That's a thriving industry already.

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Q Well, if I could look at that from another perspective, then. If NASA puts more of its energies in the direction of the space shuttle, the space station, will you be able to do those jobs better?

DR. FLETCHER: Oh, I think so. Yes. If we can get the commercial ELV -- or, pardon me -- the ELV load off of our back and give it all to the private sector, that will allow us to turn our attention more to R&D, and I believe that's the intent of the President's program.

Q Dr. Fletcher, didn't you actually win a lot less when it comes to manned exploration than it seems here? After all, the President didn't commit himself going anywhere, at any particular time -- and the only commitment is $100 million, which is small change if this thing --

DR. FLETCHER: I think -- I think I want to say something, and I think the other two gentlemen with me will agree with me. NASA didn't win anything. The nation won something by this new space policy. And it isn't just expanding human presence into the solar system. It is providing opportunites for the private sector. All of this is -- and it also has new directions for the Defense Department. All this is part of the new policy. So, I think the nation won a considerable --

Q But the manned portion of it -- there's no commitment to do anything. Only come in and spend $100 million on esoteric technologies.

DR. FLETCHER: And to set a goal -- a long-range goal to move out of Earth orbit into the solar system, and followed by an appropriate budget, which will be announced next week.

Q Dr. Fletcher, NASA used to be all alone in the space business, and now suddenly you've acquired two partners in the commercial industry. What did you have to give up to do all this and why did you have to give it up?

DR. FLETCHER: I don't believe anybody gave up anything. This is an appropriate policy. We're all working together on this program. Space -- I'll have to remind everybody that space is a place, and it's now available through a variety of transportation systems, one of which is the space shuttle, others are the commercial launch vehicles. And, so that means military is going to be there, science is going to be there. We're going to explore that frontier, but also the private sector is going to be there in a much more serious way.

Q May I follow that up? But this announcement has been postponed as often as the next flight of the shuttle. And -- and we hear that it was warfare between the three of you -- among the three of you. And can you address that at all?

SECRETARY BURNLEY: Let me have a turn. To begin with -- to begin with, before Dr. Fletcher returned to NASA in February 1984, President Reagan issued an executive order that assigned to the Department of Transportation the central clearinghouse function on licensing private sector launches. The policy announcement today builds on that initial decision. But this is not the first time this issue has been addressed by this President. In fact, it's been addressed on several occasions since the February '84 action by him, and Congress, later in 1984, codified that assignment to DOT.

We're talking about not just issues of national, but obviously of international significance here. And I think that all three of us share the view that this is a very, very solidly grounded policy. It builds in resiliency and redundancy for the American space sector in both the public and private sectors.

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Declassified and Approved For Release 2012/07/17 : CIA-RDP92B00181R001801700012-1

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Obviously, along the way, we have had some pretty vigorous, but always friendly, discussions. And I think the outcome of that give-and-take, which goes on on all major policy issues inside the government, is, again, a very positive one.

Q Mr. Secretary, are you --

Q Secretary Burnley -- could you -- you said you wanted to get government off the back of the private space industries. DOT has been looking into ELV since '84. What -- in what ways are you going to get government off your back? And what was going wrong before?

SECRETARY BURNLEY: Well, nothing was going wrong before, but obviously with the need first for us to set up a process by which these licenses could be issued, which took some time -- it had never been done before. And then with the Challenger disaster which caused, as you know, in the summer of 1986, a decision by the President -- and NASA fully paticipated in that decision -- as to what would and would not be on the manifest for the shuttle when it's back in business -- that created, for the first time, if my memory serves me correctly, Jim, something in the neighborhood of 20 satellites, give or take a few. But we're looking for a ride somewhere.

Now, at that point, the question was, was the U.S. government going to be able to free up our private sector sufficiently to provide those services, or was that business going to go abroad? So we've been working very vigorously since that time to make sure that our companies have at least an even shot at it. For example, we've had very extensive discussions with the Defense Department and with the industry to work out a model rental agreement, a launch facilities agreement, that those who wish to rent facilities at Cape Kennedy or at Vandenberg from DOD will sign.

That's the kind of policy implementation that's been going on. And as Jim said a few moments ago, we expect, with the announcement today, to be making a series of announcements this year because we know that, as I said in my prepared remarks, we've got something on the order of 12 to 15 signed contracts out there and that many again in the works. So I think that this is going to be a very, very active area.

Q Mr. Secretary, are you encouraging --

Q What's changing between today's announcement and what was happening prior to this?

SECRETARY BURNLEY: Well, what's changing is that we've now got the United States government sending a very clear signal to the private sector that it will not longer attempt in any way, shape, or form to monopolize within the boundaries of this country this business. Now, that's not the first time that signal's been sent, but it certainly reaffirms it and strengthens it, and it further directs U.S. government agencies to go buy launch servies for their needs -- where you don't need a manned presence. And as Jim noted, NASA will be buying its own launch facilities from the private sector.
Bill Verity and NOAA and his department will be buying such services. DOD has already started the process of buying such services.

So we've got the United States government looking to the private sector in a major way now, and this policy pulls that together for buying services that it needs and, additionally, doing all it can to free up the private sector to sell its services to other people.

A lot of these contracts that have been signed, it's important to note, are with U.S. companies that are going to launch

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satellites owned by other governments -- by the British Broadcasting Corporation, for example. Those are the kinds of things that are beginning to happen now.

Q Mr. Secretary, are you encouraging the development of private launch pads so that, perhaps like we have -- maybe 50 years ago, airports were an odd thing -- you had a few of them around, maybe we'll start to see regional launch pads and, eventually, a launch pad in every city? (Laughter.)

SECRETARY BURNLEY: I think that that won't happen on my watch, but -- (laughter) -- but you've already got the states of Hawaii and Florida setting up study commissions for the purpose of encouraging just that kind of development, where you have privately-owned and operated launch facilities. And, yes, the United States government, both in what we do at the Department of Transportation and what Jim does, what Bill does, what they do at Defense, is going to do everything it can to encourage that development as well.

Again, one of the great strengths that we're getting out of this policy is redundancy. To the extent that the United States government encourages and makes it easier for the private sector to build its own launch facilities and develops a strong production base for building rockets, producing them, it means if you have one system that develops problems, you've got, hopefully, several fall-back systems that you compare it to.

Q Secretary Verity, what are the national security implications of lifting the restrictions on resolution of photographic satellites? Doesn't that open the way to all kinds of spy satellites in the private sector?

SECRETARY VERITY: Well, I believe that's been thoroughly gone into by the national security people, and feel that what has been done is in the best interest of the national security.

Q Why?

SECRETARY VERITY: That's probably a question that Jim can answer better than me.

DR. FLETCHER: It is awfully important that we make available to industry, and also to the whole world pictures of Earth resources and other things from space. NASA, years ago, had a program called Landsat. That is now turned over to the Department of Commerce and is operated by a private firm. The issue before us is should we begin to make available lower -- higer resolution, smaller images, so to speak.

Now, the Defense Department, of course, has available some of those images. And all that is happening is that the restrictions on how small an object you can see are in the process of being changed. And that will open up lots of opportunities for commercial use. Now, just how that comes down is not really defined yet. That's a decision for the future.

Q Dr. Fletcher, one of -- part of what got the United States public behind the space program in the first place, aside from the imagination of opening up a new frontier, was the aspect of a race between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The general press has pointed out in the last year that the United States is far behind the Soviets in many aspects of the space program -- heavy lifting capacity and longevity in space -- the ability to keep humans in space for extended periods. What is this policy going to do to change that, and what, in your estimation, are the aspects of the space program in which the Soviets are ahead?

DR. FLETCHER: Well, I think you answered your own questions. We're ahead in almost every area of space, including

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Declassified and Approved For Release 2012/07/17 : CIA-RDP92B00181R001801700012-1

commercial, and we aim to keep it that way. But the two areas which we seem not to be ahead at the moment are in the two areas that you mentioned -- one is the heavy-lift launch vehicle, and the other one is long duration human activity.

Now, remember that we had a heavy-lift launch vehicle in the late 1960s, and that's how we got to the moon.

Q Which we abandoned.

DR. FLETCHER: Which we abandoned. It was abandoned because it was too costly. We will, in the late 1990s, have another heavy-lift launch vehicle which is much better than the Energia in the sense that it will be low-cost and it will be more flexible. And that is what we're aiming at, is a low-cost version of the Saturn V that we had in the 1960s. And in that sense, we will not only catch up, but surpass the Soviet Union when that is completed.

And then the other area, long duration human activity, we are clearly behind, but that's one of the major purposes of this space station, which we'll have in the early to mid-1990s. And one of the principal purposes of that space station is to test long duration human activity in space. And that's a necessary step that you have to go through before you go on to extended trips to the moon, not just visit and come back, but extended trips to the moon, say, to establish a base, or even a one-time-only trip to Mars. It typically takes one year each way to Mars. So that's a necessary step. The space station fulfills that step.

MR. FITZWATER: The young lady right here.

Q Okay, Mr. Verity, this also seems to be an acknowledgement that space is a very expensive place to do business, that the government has to start funding people before there is some sort of a commercial base out there. What I'd like to know is, what criteria has the administration set up for companies that it chooses to support?

SECRETARY VERITY: Well, I think that the -- your remark that the government needs to fund these things -- this is the first time that the private sector has come forward and said that they're willing to put up all the money necessary to do this. However, in order to be able to borrow the money needed, they need the government to agree to lease part of the facility. Mr. Fletcher said maybe around 70 percent -- it's really between 50 percent and 70 percent. There are a lot of government agencies that would like to be on this space facility. But the private sector would like to get as many private people in there.

This is just another effort in space. We have NASA -- that's been a monopoly. Now we're going to have another opportunity for the private sector to be into space and together, we're going to do a lot better job than just a single effort, so that this expands the opportunities. Space is just a place to do business. This is another place where business can thrive and new jobs are created.

Q This is a very exclusive club, though. I mean, has there been any thought given to which companies out there are worthy of rental, or worthy to be leased, or worthy of government support in some fashion?

SECRETARY VERITY: Well, there are a lot of them that want to be on this, and I think what we're -- we'll have to do maybe -- you've already gone through that.

DR. FLETCHER: I'd like to address that, Bill. We -- it's open to everybody. What it has to do -- the proposal has to come from private industry that gives them a reasonable return on their investment. But also, if we put up any money for it, it gives us what we need. And so any proposal that comes in has to be of

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Declassified and Approved For Release 2012/07/17 : CIA-RDP92B00181R001801700012-1

value to the government, and also gives an appropriate return on investment for the risk that that private venture assumes.

Now, I don't want to say this is a new thought because NASA's been doing that since I had my first tour in 1975, I believe, is when we first started this. But it is pulled together now in the national space policy, and it's made clear that NASA, as Bill says, will not have a monopoly on this. This will be done -- anybody comes in, and we'll have some people helping us make sure that NASA -- it doesn't have that monopoly anymore. That's what the new space policy does.

SECRETARY BURNLEY: I think we need to be very clear, though, because I'm not sure we've been as clear as we should be, that what's happening with respect to the industrial space facility is that NASA is going to put out a request for proposals and invite everybody out there who may have an interest in providing the service to the government to bid. It is not a sole source approach.

Now, whether there will be more than one company out there ready to respond is something we'll all find out after they publish in The Commerce Business Daily. But this is not a sole source; it is an open opportunity.

Q Well, this 150 days that you mentioned, Dr. Fletcher -- is that until you receive the proposal, or is it 150 days until you're going to make a decision on who you're going to lease from and who is going to do this?

DR. FLETCHER: It's 150 days from today.

Q Until what?

DR. FLETCHER: From the announcement.

Q Until what?

DR. FLETCHER: Until a contract with the -- or a memo -- signed agreement with the appropriate company.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

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